



## Feminine Fables

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A new iconography of the Indian woman seems to be emerging, which challenges the traditional “images” and roles of women. Dramatic changes in projecting the woman reflect changes in societal norms and taboos in a country which has both defiled the woman and idolised her. These roles for the modern woman are subversive, mapping out bold new frontiers for her to explore. The effects are persuasive in being projected through the media, the fourth estate in society and through the popular genre of Hindi cinema. Set against the feminist discourse, these images raise different questions about “seeing” the Indian woman. Traced over the century, they suggest an extraordinary transformation in imaging the Indian woman, as manifested in painting, photography, popular posters and classical cinema and as examined here in works by both men and women. In five seminal essays this book examines central issues regarding the woman: whether she is regarded as a woman or a goddess; whether her body is treated as an object or subject of pleasure; if she has the freedom to move from the home to the world outside; if she is expected to play multiple roles or is perceived in her integral self; and if she has learnt how to re-assert her own power.